



ILLINOIS READS

In Special Places

George H. Ryan, Governor

Illinois Reads in Special Places

Information Sheet

WHAT: Governor Ryan's New Reading and Literacy Program

All cities, towns and villages have a "special place", a school, a park, a courthouse, a museum, or an historic structure that is a centerpiece for that community. This initiative encourages school classes to pick a day and hold a "reading" at that special place, where kids read appropriate books along with parents, teachers and community leaders. The children would then submit photos, essays, stories, poems, drawings and pictures about the event. We will choose the "best of" these works, publish them and award certificates to the kids and schools. The ultimate goal is a book written by Illinois children about "special places" throughout the state- with a forward by you and the Governor.

WHY: Get children and families reading! The idea for this initiative originated from a trip that a Monmouth teacher made with her class to the Executive Mansion to read the children's books in the library. After that event, the class wrote about their experience of reading at the Mansion, which was then turned into a book. The Governor's Office has built on this idea, applying the same concept to every community in Illinois.

WHO: This "challenge" will be sent out to every school district in Illinois. The district then has the ability to disseminate information in a manner that best suits their community. School teachers and administrators, community leaders and parents could organize the event.

HOW: Event planners or anyone interested in the program will be able to access a "how-to" guide on the "*Illinois Reads in Special Places*" website, or can be mailed a published version. This kit will include an explanation of the program, a step-by-step planning guide, sample press releases, and other planning tools and information. The details of how, when, and to what extent the initiative is carried out are up to each district. Photos, stories, essays and artwork should be sent in before April 15, 2002

WHEN: November 15, 2001 - April 15, 2002

WHERE: Any place "special" to the community, children, families and schools. Suggested ideas for "special places" have ranged from the community library or local historic landmark to the principal's office at a junior high school.

MORE INFO: For assistance not provided in the "how-to guide", please send us an e-mail at: IllinoisReads@mail.state.il.us .

Event Planning Tips

Getting Started:

- **Step 1** Decide on the size of your event. Decide if the event will be a community wide effort, or if it will be extended only to your school district, individual school, single classroom, etc. (For further assistance getting the community involved, see "Planning a Community-Wide Event").
- **Step 2** Brainstorm how your event will be organized.
 - 1.) Will you choose the "special place", or will the participants (e.g. children and families) choose their own "special place"?
 - 2.) Will the event take place during school (requiring special arrangements for children to miss regular class-time), or will the event take place outside of regular school hours?
 - 3.) Who will be in charge of informing and recruiting participants? Who will administer the event? (Teachers, school officials, parents, community organization?)
 - 4.) Who will be taking pictures?
- **Step 3** Present your ideas to "key players" (representatives of those who will be involved, both organizers and participants).
- **Step 4** Use the feedback you received from Step 3 to create a more developed/ detailed outline (see "Creating a Detailed Plan-of-Action").

Creating a Detailed Plan-of-Action

When planning your event, take some time to ask yourself the following questions. Planning the event thoroughly will help ensure a success for all concerned. Use the following questions to develop a checklist to help ensure your event's success.

- ◆ Who is the audience?
- ◆ When will the event occur? How long will it last?
- ◆ How many people should I invite? (there may be space limitations)
- ◆ Is there a protocol for inviting school and district administrators or other officials?
- ◆ Will I need to decorate the room? (e.g. banners, large photos, student artwork)
- ◆ Will I need signs to direct people to the event?
- ◆ Will I need to issue a press release? (see the sample press release on the previous page)
- ◆ Will I need to engage a photographer?
- ◆ (If this is a media visit), will I need a press kit? What should it contain? (e.g. fact sheet on the program, press release about the event, bio and photo of special guests)
- ◆ Are the students fully aware of the purpose of the event? Have they been briefed on the importance of engaging the public in literacy and reading efforts?
- ◆ What is the agenda for the event? (e.g. welcome guests, brief presentation on the program, when the "reading" will commence, when special guests will be reading, when and if there will be a group picture taken, etc.).
- ◆ Will I need help to prepare the site on the day of the visit? (e.g. hang banners, place signage)
- ◆ Will there be any additional costs to organize and orchestrate the event, and who might be able to provide financial assistance? (see "Who Can Help" for ideas)
- ◆ How will I follow up on the event? (e.g. thank you letter for attending, regular updates throughout the year about reading initiatives)

Planning a Community-Wide Event:

- ❖ Make a list of all the resources in your community. Compile a list of contact names and separate into categories: public officials, business leaders, community leaders, educational leaders, parenting organizations/groups, etc.
- ❖ Now begin to make up a schedule of persons you would like to invite to your event.
- ❖ List ways that they can help with the "Illinois Reads in Special Places" event now, and how they might assist reading and literacy promotion efforts in the future.
- ❖ Let your partners know how they can get involved in your program. Invite them to speak at the event, give them some idea of what this group would like to hear about from them, and be sure to mention that you have invited the media.
- ❖ Prepare print materials for visitors to take with them.

Who Can Help?

Below is a short list of resources you may wish to contact in your community to encourage them to get involved with your event.

- **Local cable operator** - contact the community affairs manager to see if the local cable company will help you promote your event
- **Bookstores** - the community relations manager may have some great ideas for activities, and the bookstore may promote your event in their newsletter
- **Library** - libraries are great at planning family events, and may be able to support your efforts in a variety of ways
- **Local Affiliates for Network TV** - the media is always looking for human interest stories, and newscasters may want to get involved personally by making an appearance or reading at the event
- **Radio Stations** - ask station promotions managers to include a Public Service Announcement in their rotation, or have their D.J.'s make appearances as guest readers
- **Local Public Officials** - ask your local elected officials and representatives, or members of their office to get involved
- **Local Organizations** - Many groups such as Rotary International are very literacy focused. Call upon local groups not only to participate, but also to seek assistance in promoting the event and providing funding or supplies
- **Local Celebrities** - invite celebrities to join the celebration by performing readings or making appearances
- **Local Businesses** - many businesses may be willing to provide supplies for your event, including refreshments, books or writing supplies, or printing (be sure to thank them in your press releases and other promotional materials)

Media Advisory

- Use the draft press release included with this guide to provide as complete a picture as possible of your group or organization's event, as well as of literacy achievements and needs in the community.
- Call media organizations to get names, addresses and fax numbers of reporters who cover education issues. Faxing or mailing to a particular person is far more effective than leaving the addressee line blank. If you already have names, call anyway to make sure those reporters are still the appropriate contacts. At television stations the right contact might be the assignment editor.
- Fax or mail the release to arrive several days before the date of your event, so reporters and editors have time to put the event on their schedules.
- Follow up with a phone call to make sure the right person received the release. Once you're on the phone, try to stimulate interest by highlighting special aspects of the event. For television reporters, emphasize any interesting pictures that the event might generate. If there are preliminary activities, consider suggesting that a photographer from a newspaper or television camera crew attend.
- Offer to provide background information to reporters and editors about community and/or state literacy achievements and needs.
- If a press release seems too ambitious, providing basic information about your group or organization's event to your local newspaper's "Calendar" or "Events" section can still help encourage community participation.

Sample Press Release

[Print on your program's stationary]

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: [Your Name]

[Your Phone Number]

GOVERNOR RYAN'S "*ILLINOIS READS* IN SPECIAL PLACES"
PROGRAM TO ENCOURAGE FAMILY READING IN COMMUNITY
[Your City and State, Date, 2001]...

[Your Program's/School's Name] is participating in the "*Illinois Reads* in Special Places" program on [date of your event] at [location]. [Briefly describe some of the activities available at your event, including time and other logistics, and who would be an appropriate audience (e.g., for parents and their young children)].

The "*Illinois Reads* in Special Places" initiative was announced on November 15, 2001, Illinois Family Reading Night, by First Lady Lura Lynn Ryan. The program encourages school classes to pick a day sometime between now and the end of the school year and hold a "reading" at a special place, where kids read appropriate books along with parents, teachers and community leaders. It was designed as part of Governor Ryan's "*Illinois Reads*" initiative, intended to encourage not only children, but families and communities to spend time reading together.

"This program is a wonderful opportunity for everyone to come together and discover the joy of reading," said Mrs. Ryan. "We chose Family Reading Night to announce this program because it provides a new, fun and easy way to engage the family and community in literacy efforts".

The idea for "*Illinois Reads* in Special Places" comes from a field trip Harding Elementary school children from Monmouth took to the Executive Mansion to read the children's books in the library. After the event, the class wrote about their experience at the Mansion. The "*Illinois Reads* in Special Places" program takes this concept a step further: into every community in Illinois.

" 'Special places' we have heard of range from a school, park, court house, museum, or historic structure that is a centerpiece of pride within that community, to a special place within a school, like the principal's office, that makes the experience unique for the kids," said Sarah Watson, Senior Advisor on Literacy for the Governor. "We encourage each participating group to take ownership of this initiative, creating an event that best fits their school, group or community".

Students participating in the "*Illinois Reads in Special Places*" initiative are encouraged, like the Monmouth class, to send in stories, pictures, poems, or essays about their experience reading at a special place. The best entries will be published and the community, school, or class, submitting the piece rewarded. The goal is to publish a book written and illustrated by Illinois children about "special places" throughout the state. "Not only are we encouraging families and children to read together, but we are celebrating pride in our communities," said Governor Ryan.

For more information about [your event], please contact [provide contact] at [contact address, website, number]. For additional information about the "*Illinois Reads in Special Places*" initiative, please click on the "*Illinois Reads in Special Places*" icon located at: www.state.il.us , or call 217-782-0316.

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Suggestions of Locations for your "Special Place":

Remember, these are merely suggestions! The possibilities are endless...

In Your Community:

- Library
- Museum
- Courthouse
- City Hall
- Historic Building: Post Office, Old House, Old School Building (any Illinois Historic Preservation certified building)
- Local Monument: Statue, Structure, Sculpture, Artwork
- An Historic Abraham Lincoln Site (Our Favorite 😊)
- Zoo, Aquarium
- Park, Preservation Area
- Botanical Garden, Rose Garden
- A "Staple" Restaurant in Your Town (i.e. local or downtown diner)
- At the Mall
- Building of One of Your Sponsors (In the Lobby, In the "CEO's Office")
- Special or Seasonal Exhibit

In Your School:

- In the Principal's Office
- In the Teacher Lunchroom
- For Elementary School Children: Have the "Younger Students" Switch Classrooms with the "Older Students"
- On the Playground
- In the Locker Room

Suggestions of Possible "Special Days" to Host Your Event:

Below is a list of designated days each month that could easily be used to create a theme for your "Reading" in a "Special Place". In addition to these days, other suggestions have been to use a day your school, group or community already has a particular event planned for. For example:

A school or class-

If your school or class has a field trip already planned, the "special place" could be where the group visits. Time could be set aside to read while at the "special place". For example, one middle school class from central Illinois is taking a trip to Chicago, and plans to read and take pictures reading at different Chicago sites.

A community group-

If your organization or group has a special day planned or program already in place, use the event or program in coordination with the "Illinois Reads in Special Places" initiative. For example, some organizations already have "Family Reading Nights" scheduled for each month. Find a "special place" for the group to go on one of the dates already scheduled.

Again, these are just suggestions! All we ask is that the event takes place sometime between November 2001, and the end of the 2001-2002 school year (May or June, 2002).

Monthly Calendar of "Special Days" 2001-2002

November 2001 -

- Illinois Family Reading Night- Thursday, November 15th Sponsored by the Illinois State Library. For more information see <http://www.cyberdriveillinois.com:80/library/isl/reading/frn.html>
- National Children's Book Week, National Education Week- November 12th-18th. "Children's Book Week" sponsored by the Children's Book Council. For more information see <http://www.cbcbooks.org/>
National Education Week sponsored by National Education Association. For more information see <http://www.nea.org/aew/>
- National Young Reader's Day- Sunday, November 18th

December 2001 -

- The Month of December- Link the event to a Christmas theme
- Link the event to Bill of Rights Day- Sunday, December 15th

January 2002 -

- Link the event to Martin Luther King Day- Monday, January 21st
- Canadian Family Literacy Day- Sunday, January 27th (link the event to the study of Canada!)

February 2002 -

- Link the event to National Freedom Day (Signing of 13th Amendment; Presidential proclamation)- Friday, February 1st
- Link the event to Abraham Lincoln's Birthday: February 12th
- Link the event to President's Day: Monday, February 18th

March 2002 -

- "Read Across America Day"- March 1st, Dr. Seuss's Birthday. The National Education Association is calling for every child to be reading in the company of a caring adult. For more information see <http://www.nea.org/readacross/>

April 2002 -

- International Children's Book Day- April 2nd, Hans Christian Andersen's Birthday. Sponsored by the International Board on Children's Books. For more information see http://www.ibby.org/Seiten/04_child.htm
- National Library Week- April 14th- 20th. Sponsored by the American Library Association. For more information see <http://www.ala.org/pio/nlw/>

After The Event: What Do I Do Now?

Get recognition for your event, students, families, school, school district and community! First, send us an e-mail letting us know what you have done. Next step: Send in your Entries! Remember, one of the goals of this program is a book written and illustrated by school-aged youth that highlights special reading places throughout Illinois. We encourage participants to send in their creative responses to the Governor's Office.

Where Can I E-mail Information About What We Have Done?

Please send us information about what your group has done to: IllinoisReads@mail.state.il.us

What Will Happen If I Send in Entries? We will compile the creative responses in a book to be published in the months following the completion of the program. The best of the submitted works will be rewarded and highlighted in this book.

What Should I Submit? Any creative response to the event capable of being reprinted in a book: retelling of the event in a storybook format, essays, sketches, drawings, poems, pictures, photos, collages, etc. These entries should be accompanied by the entry form included with this guide, or by your own cover sheet with all of the information asked for in our entry form.

When Do I Submit the Entries? Entries will be accepted anytime after November 15, 2001. All entries must be post-marked by April 15, 2002. We will notify those whose responses are chosen for the book by the end of the school year.

Where Do I Send the Entries? All entries should be accompanied by the entry form (see next page), and sent to:

**Illinois Reads in Special Places
Governor George H. Ryan
222 S. College Street Fl.1
Springfield, IL 62706**

After The Event: Getting Started...Again!

When deciding how to arrange this last portion of your event, you may want to consider following:

- ❑ **Step 1** Send an e-mail to IllinoisReads@mail.state.il.us , letting us know what your group has done.
- ❑ **Step 2** Make sure that participants know about the opportunity to receive special recognition for themselves, their school and community by submitting essays, drawings, pictures, poems or any other creative work back to the Governor's Office.
- ❑ **Step 3** Decide what you want your participants to send back to the Governor's Office
 - 1.) Do you want to hold your own contest, allowing students to choose whether or not they want to do anything after the event, or do you want to make an assignment out of the work? (e.g. have all students draw a picture or write a story about their favorite part of the event)
 - 2.) Will you allow the students to come up with their own interpretations, or do you want to structure the entries (i.e. allow students to submit any creative response, or ask them to specifically "draw a picture" or "write a poem")?
 - 3.) Do you want to do your entry as a group project and submit one story (for example) from the whole group?
- ❑ **Step 4** Decide how you want to submit the entries
 - 1.) If you choose to make an assignment out of the task or choose to have your own contest, will you or someone else be in charge of judging and sending in the entries?
 - 2.) If the students are left with the "option" of submitting their work, how will you review and decide which entries to send in?
 - 3.) What will the time frame be for students to submit entries?
- ❑ **Step 5** Print the entry form provided with this "how-to" guide, fill it out and send it in along with your entries!

"*Illinois Reads* in Special Places" Entry Form

Please type or print the following information, and submit with each entry.

Circle One: **Group Entry** **Individual Entry**

If Submitting a Group Entry, Number of Entries Submitted: _____

Contact Name: _____

School: _____

Grade: _____ **Age(s)** _____

Address: _____

City: _____ **Zip Code:** _____

Date you had your "Illinois Reads in Special Places Event":

Location of your "Special Place":

What are you submitting (e.g. story, photos, drawings, etc.)?
